



REPRESENTING COUNTIES ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE SAN JOAQUINS

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Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare*

## **SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE MEETING**

September 10, 2004  
Stockton, California

### **Item 1 Call to Order and Announcements**

- A. Chair Connie Conway called the meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee (SJVRC) to order on Friday September 10, 2004, at 12:10 p.m. The meeting was held at the Robert J. Cabral Memorial Station in Stockton. Chair Connie Conway led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- B. Stacey Mortensen welcomed everyone to Stockton and offered a tour of the recently restored station following the meeting. She also notified everyone that lunch would be available.
- C. Self-introductions were made around the room.
- D. Remarks by the Chair – Chair Conway welcomed everyone but said, time permitting, her remarks would be made at the end of the meeting.

### **Item 2 Public Comment on Non Agenda Items Only**

Michael Barnbaum announced the upcoming CCJPA meeting on October 15, 2004, in Suisun City.

### **Item 3 Action Items**

- A. After some discussion, the minutes of the July 9, 2004, meeting in Martinez were moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (M. Snyder, S. Mortensen).

### **Item 4 Guest Speakers**

- A. D.J. Mitchell, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway – Mr. Mitchell handed out some information regarding On Time Performance (OTP) and noted the OTP had dropped drastically in June. He said there are several key indicators of OTP problems. The recent indicators on the San Joaquin Corridor have been blocked sidings; late trains, no matter who they belong to; service disruption, such as broken rails, crossing accidents, maintenance of way, etc.; recovery from the June flood; and more trains because of business growth.

BNSF is working on some of these problems. They are periodically placing an officer on the train to deal with passenger problems; hiring more people to supplement when crews time out; planning some additional track upgrades and repairs; upgrading or repairing some signals; and bringing the speed back up on the portion of the track that was flooded.

BNSF has also finalized the agreement with the UP to divert some of their trains to the UP tracks to reduce delays on the San Joaquin Corridor. They are also planning a track blitz soon on the Stockton Subdivision, so there will be bus bridges set up for about 10 days. These track upgrades will also help with the on-time performance.

Bruce Heard asked if the Calwa yard connection would help improve the on-time performance. D.J. said yes, because the track can be cleared for passing. Howard Abelson asked if there is a trespasser fatality, how long does that delay the train. D.J. said sometimes it is as much as 2-3 hours, and it takes 8-10 hours to recover and get everything back on schedule.

George Gaekle said he read an article that railroads are on meltdown. Is the Secretary of Transportation doing anything about it? D.J. said BNSF is in good shape. They are hiring additional crews and purchasing more equipment.

Dick Hauck said the facts and figures for OTP and rail traffic today seem to be increasing. What about the future? D.J. said he will give a status of the points presented today in November, and then we can see more clearly where we will stand in the future. If the nine points are accomplished, the trains should be on time.

Mr. Miller asked what the number of trains running today is versus past years. D. J. replied that the number is increasing at about 10 trains per year, while capacity should be about 10 trains less than now. With today's scarce capital, everyone is scrambling to keep up with the growth. Mr. Miller said he understands and is sympathetic, but maybe the SJVRC should be advocating for more financial help from state and local governments. D.J. said he is waiting for the Surface Transportation Act to see what happens. He appreciates us raising some of the questions, but some of the questions are more public policy concerns.

- B. Michael Hart, Sierra Railroad – Art Lloyd introduced Mr. Hart, president of the Sierra Railroad, Yolo Short Line, and the Skunk Train. Mr. Hart's staff is currently working on a study about emission-free locomotives. The locomotives will run on bio-diesel. Bio-diesel is fuel derived from renewed vegetable oil. The Sierra Railroad recently received an award for their testing and research project.

Currently many short lines use railroad locomotive castoffs and are exempt from emissions standards. In rebuilding the locomotives and installing the SCR system (catalytic converters), the locomotives can be powered by bio-diesel that will reduce emissions by 95%. The USEPA is in support of a collaborative to study and reduce diesel emissions.

Mr. Hart's staff is currently looking for financing to develop and test four locomotives. An additional positive side effect to the bio-diesel production is that California farmers could grow many of the crops that would be used to produce the bio-diesel. Mr. Hart noted that currently the bio-diesel locomotives are best utilized for switching.

#### **Item 5 Subcommittee Reports**

- A. Strategic Planning/JPA: Chair Connie Conway said the letters to the Boards of Supervisors were sent out. Connie and Art met with Mr. Ferrera of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency (BTH) to discuss the SJVRC's concerns about the possibility of a JPA and improving the reliability of service. Mr. Ferrera said he is willing to meet with the SJVRC representatives and encourages future meetings. Mr. Ferrera asked about the Bakersfield to Los Angeles route. Art will be supplying him with the plans from 1928. Art also noted that the SJVRC needed to move ahead carefully and make sure to work with the COG's and the counties. It is anticipated the local entities will be asked for about \$500,000 each.

George Gaekle said the Boards of Supervisors would need facts, figures, and an analysis of the plan before they will consider it. Connie agreed that meetings with the Boards and COGs would be necessary to get feelings about their interest and willingness to fund. George noted the CCJPA would not be in existence if not for the study. Connie said she would first like to meet face to face not just have people base their decisions on facts and figures. Gloria Keene noted that many of Boards tend to be conservative, and they are looking for win/win situations. She asked if someone would be available for face-to-face meetings. Connie said she and Art would get some basic facts and figures together if meetings were requested.

Mr. Miller asked if Pete Snyder had anything in his experience that may help. Mr. Snyder said he had discussions with the CCJPA (Gene) and BART (Tom Margrove) regarding this potential JPA. He said BART has no desire to take on this JPA unless the SJVRC would be willing to meld the two corridors. BART's cost for the CCJPA to start up was \$700,000 and took 18 months. To date they have only been reimbursed \$130,000. For them to help again, they must be fully reimbursed and indemnified along with the approval of the CCJPA Board. He said a lead agency must be selected to begin the process. Pete estimated \$75,000 per

county would be required for seed money to begin. Cam Beach also noted that CCJPA is made up of Regional Transit Representatives, not counties. George Gaekle said he is willing to make a motion to drop the JPA, but he will wait to see.

Harvey Hall asked if, in the future, copies should be made available to the SJVRC members if a letter is mailed to the Board of Supervisors.

- B. Legislative/Finance: Chair Howard Abelson said he and Tyrone Bland would be meeting in the near future to discuss their proposed meeting with the BTH Secretary's office. Connie said they had let Mr. Ferrera know that Howard would be contacting him for a meeting.
- C. Marketing/Operations: Chair Larry Miller said the Marketing Committee is currently working on the Ridership review, Hispanic ridership, parking, and security at stations. Dick Hauck complimented Warren on his BNSF letter and BNSF for recognizing the problems. He is hopeful that everyone working together can improve the situation.
  - 1. Amtrak/Caltrans Marketing Report – Carol Shannon reported there was not a summer campaign. They are adding some more coverage on the Spanish radio stations in Fresno, Stockton, and Bakersfield. They are going to have a Lionel train contest, and there are new Yosemite books.
  - 2. Caltrans Division of Rail Report – Bill Bronte said Caltrans is working on Figarden concern, but he and BNSF would meet separately with the Fresno group to discuss.
  - 3. Regional State Rail Update – In the interest of time, the report was delayed.

#### **Item 6 Committee Member Concerns**

- A. Emission from Diesel Locomotives – Supervisor Bob Waterston was not in attendance for the items covered by Mr. Hart. Connie and Art will bring him up to date.
- B. State Budget Concerns – Bill Bronte reported the rail budget is still under the radar, and he is waiting to hear about any additional available funding.
- C. Meeting Preparation Materials – Harvey Hall requested in the future any reports that can be made available prior to the meeting date would be appreciated, so the members have time to review them.

**Item 7 Suggestions for Future Agenda Items**

No items were listed at this time.

**Item 8 Future Meetings**

|                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| November 12, 2004 | Bakersfield             |
| January 14, 2005  | Hanford                 |
| March 11, 2005    | Fresno – Annual Meeting |
| May 13, 2005      | Sacramento              |

**Item 9 Adjournment**

Prior to adjournment, Tyrone Bland invited everyone to the Grand Opening of the Oakland Maintenance Facility on October 12, 2004, that will be followed by a reception with David Gunn. Chair Conway thanked everyone for their attendance, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.